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THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE SOUTHERN BLACK BELTS¹

IN a former essay² I have shown, from a study of slave prices, that slavery became an economic burden in America, and that the purchase of the unfree laborers made a great drain upon the earnings of the community which imported them. American slaveholding was essentially industrial in character; and industry under the slave-using system was essentially capitalistic. For the sake of controlling the labor, a very large portion of the capital was invested in the legal ownership of the labor itself. This system was expensive not only to the individual planter, but to the whole community. If other sections and periods of the slaveholding South were analyzed, the burdensomeness of slaveholding and the slave-trade, which I have demonstrated for the cotton belt, would be found to have prevailed as a very general phenomenon.

The present study is concerned with the tendency of slavery as a system of essentially capitalistic industry to concentrate wealth, such as there was, within the hands of a single economic class and within certain distinctive geographical areas. Aside from land, slaves were in the South by far the principal form of wealth. The study of the administrative and geographical concentration of slave property is of course a study of the growth of the plantation system and of the black belts produced by it.

At any time in any typical district of the South, there were non-slaveholders, small slaveholders, and large slaveholders. Most members of each of these classes were engaged in agriculture. The non-slaveholder tilled his land by the labor of himself and his family. The large slaveholder tilled his by the labor of his slaves under supervision. The small slaveholder often combined the labor of his slaves, his family, and himself in a mixed system. Thus there were

¹ The research of which this article is a product has been materially aided by the American Bureau of Industrial Research, by the United States Census Bureau, and by the Carnegie Institution of Washington.

² "The Economic Cost of Slaveholding in the Cotton Belt", published in the *Political Science Quarterly*, June, 1905 (XX. 257-275). Further studies of a complementary nature are: "The Economics of the Plantation", in the *South Atlantic Quarterly* for July, 1903 (II. 231-236), and "The Plantation as a Civilizing Factor", in the *Sewanee Review* for July, 1904 (XII. 257-267).

small, medium, and large units of industry, which have been distinguished as small farms, large farms, and plantations. In each of these types of organization a more or less definite system of labor and administration was followed. This is a static view of the Southern industrial régime, and with more or less elaboration has been the one nearly always presented by historians and economists alike.

This description should be not the end of the matter, but a mere preface to the study of the dynamic forces at work and of the result which they effected in shaping the economic and social life and in controlling political policies. It is the dynamic view which is essential for the full understanding of the South. An emphasis upon the dynamic phase of Southern conditions and upon the plantation system as a principal factor in the shaping of Southern economy is the chief contribution here attempted.

At the outset in some of the Southern colonies there were experiments with systems of joint labor and paternalism. As soon as these had given place to private enterprise, there began the differentiation of the two chief industrial types, the plantation and the farm, which were thenceforth to be characteristic. In each instance settlement was first made on the seaboard, and prosperity was first achieved where certain staple crops could be raised and exported to market. The great abundance of land available and the short-lived fertility of most of the soil caused a great hunger for land and a rapid extension of settlement to satisfy that hunger. Thus the westward movement set in; and the van of it was made up of small farmers. While actually modified by many complications, which must here with doubtful safety be left out of account, the chief influence shaping the migration was the competition of industrial units.

After a certain period in the production of each staple, whether tobacco, rice, or cotton, the increase of the output caused a reduction of prices and profits, and brought distress to the less efficient of the producers, forcing many of them to abandon the industry. The Southern staples were all excellently adapted to production by the plantation system. The small producers were accordingly at a disadvantage, and were in most cases the first to make a change. The farmers tended to drift to the edge of settlement and to assert some independence of the staples by producing as far as possible the articles which their own families needed to consume. The further the farmer removed from tide-water and markets, the greater his tendency to a self-sufficing economy.

Many of the planters were also on the move. The tide of small farmers advancing toward the frontier in search of new opportunity

was followed in many areas by a tide of planters who sought new openings where their capital might be employed more advantageously than in the older areas where the competition was more stringent. Districts which from the lack of the required qualities of soil or climate or of facilities of transportation were not available for the planters could be enjoyed by the farmers alone; but all others were entered by the planters sooner or later, and after more or less conflict were dominated by them.

Some of the non-slaveholders moved away from the encroaching plantations and settled anew as yeomen farmers; others by thrift bought slaves and in time became planters; others simply held their own in spite of the disadvantage of competing with negro labor in the same industry; while still others retrograded in the scale of life, drifted to the barren tracts, and lived from hand to mouth as anemic poor-whites. The planters, meanwhile, continued to encroach wherever they could upon the territory already occupied in part by the smaller industrial units. The very nature of the plantation system caused this phenomenon. The case was very much like that of the great commercial and industrial organizations of to-day, whose nature requires them to encroach wherever possible upon the spheres of their weaker rivals.

The economic history of the Old South in its plantation districts was made up very largely of extensions and repetitions of the same general phenomena. One suitable area after another was occupied by much the same process. The period of occupation was followed by the same strife of industrial systems, which resulted usually in the victory of plantation methods. Then the planters continued to compete among themselves, and wore out such soil as was exhaustible. The final stage, reached in a few districts, was either a change to varied industry to which the plantation system was unsuited, or the partial depopulation of the country through the exodus of all the more energetic producers to new and more attractive lands. Superficially the process worked with a considerable variety in the several districts; but fundamentally the conditions and the development were a simple process, repeated in one area after another.

The theme is one whose treatment is readily aided by the use of statistics. Take for example the county of Crawford, which lies in a good cotton district in middle western Georgia. The state secured this tract from the Indians in 1821, and quickly threw it open to settlement through the agency of that highly democratic institution, the Georgia land lottery. The land was divided into tracts of 202½ acres each, and distributed by lottery among all the citizens of the state who were fortunate in the drawing. Immi-

grants of various types flowed in apace, and within a few years the population had reached the normal density for the state in that period. Then ensued the usual contest of the systems for domination. We happen to have a census of population and slaveholdings in Crawford county in 1824,¹ just three years after its opening, and another in 1860, when the county had become an undistinguished part of the upland cotton belt. A comparison of the data furnished by the two enumerations will show the effects of the competition of industrial units and systems which we are studying.

SLAVEHOLDINGS IN 1824

<i>Owners.</i>	<i>Slaves each.</i>	<i>Owners.</i>	<i>Slaves each.</i>
27	1	6	10
18	2	2	11
17	3	1	12
9	4	2	13
7	5	2	15
9	6	1	20
4	7	1	28
1	8	1	31
5	9	1	42

SLAVEHOLDINGS IN 1860

<i>Owners.</i>	<i>Slaves each.</i>	<i>Owners.</i>	<i>Slaves each.</i>
51	1	34	10 and under 15
56	2	28	15 " " 20
30	3	20	20 " " 30
30	4	18	30 " " 40
19	5	8	40 " " 50
19	6	7	50 " " 70
16	7	1	70 " " 100
12	8	4	100 " " 200
16	9		

The total number of whites in 1824 was 1,781; and in 1860, 3,407; total slaves in 1824, 579; and in 1860, 4,270; free blacks negligible. The whites in 1824 were enumerated in 230 families, of which 116 had no slaves, and 114 possessed slaveholdings of an average size of five negroes each. In 1860 the white families had increased to about 630, of which 369 had slaveholdings averaging 11.6 in size. The average slaveholding had more than doubled in size. The most marked feature of the contrast is the growth in number and size of the larger slaveholdings—in a word, the passage of the domination of the community from the men of few or no slaves to the men of the planter class.

This was an obvious and normal development. The men with the fewest impedimenta were of course the quickest in their move-

¹ The census for 1824 was made by the state authorities. The returns are in manuscript in the state capitol at Atlanta. The figures for 1860 are from the *Eighth United States Census*, volume on agriculture, 226.

ments.¹ But the large slaveholders, though more slowly, moved surely. They gradually bought up the lands of the drawers in the lottery who did not wish to occupy their lots, and of such of their neighbors as might decide to move farther west. Thus they accumulated large tracts which would justify and maintain the plantation system. As years went on planters continued to come in from the east. Some indeed after a period of residence moved west, but their further westward journey when made at all was usually more deliberate and later than that of the smaller farmers, who moved out in search of new opportunity as easily as they had moved in in search of it.

The plantations grew in number and in size as well. The farms expanded less, if indeed their number and area did not actually decrease. In some other districts which will be considered below, the tendency to the domination by the planters, and in the long run their well-nigh complete possession of the district, was considerably more rapid and sweeping.

We are now ready to consider more fully the dynamic conditions of life and industry. The first form of society in almost every part of the South was that of the normal wilderness-frontier, in which industry was primitive, commerce rudimentary, and society individualistic in notable degree. There was little opportunity for specialization of industry or for any regular routine work.² The greater the versatility of the individual settler, when completely isolated, and the less the degree of routine, the greater was his progress in the comforts of his own homely production. So soon as he began to produce a surplus, however, and to establish a commercial connection with the rest of the world, the need of extreme versatility diminished and the value of routine increased.

If a normal development had been followed, these frontier farmers through exporting a specific surplus product would have accumulated capital, and would have developed an industrial and social system like that of Europe and the American settlements to the northward. But wherever it was possible to produce a marketable surplus through strictly routine industry in agriculture, this normal progress was interrupted in the South by an invasion of the plant-

¹ The restlessness of the frontier farmers is strikingly illustrated in the so-called "autobiography" of Gideon Lincecum, printed in the *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, VIII. 443-519.

² Cf. letter of the Reverend John Urmstone to the secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, in Francis L. Hawks, *History of North Carolina* (ed. of 1859), II. 215.

ers, who brought with them a cheaper supply of labor, with a more effective system of routine work.

While the life of the frontiersman, and of every self-sufficing farmer, was a succession of changes from one occupation to another, the economic life on the plantations was made as far as possible a fixed routine. Just as in the case of the factory system, which of course is entirely analogous as regards labor organization, the success of industry depended upon its regularity and the constant repetition of similar tasks.

On the larger plantations some of the weaker negroes were often assigned to spinning, weaving, sewing, and like occupations in the line of domestic manufactures,¹ while slaves of unusual ability were often employed altogether as plantation carpenters, blacksmiths, millers, etc.² There was always of course a supply of domestic servants in each well-to-do planter's household. Occasion also frequently arose for detaching part of the force of field-hands for sundry small tasks, whether for the benefit of the one plantation alone or in some joint undertaking of the neighborhood. But by far the greater part of the available labor supply was used for the routine work in the fields, under the direction of either the master, the overseer, or a foreman.

On most estates the laborers were divided into two or more groups for the better adjustment of the strength of the laborers to the needs of their tasks. For example, in the upland cotton districts it was customary to set apart the strongest laborers as plowhands, while the rest used the hoe, and each group worked under its

¹ For example, the "Worthy Captaine Matthews" with his weavers, his tannery, and his eight shoemakers, as well as his dairy, wheat-fields, etc., described in 1649 by the author of "A Perfect Description of Virginia". Reprinted in Force's *Tracts*, vol. II., no. VIII., pp. 14-15. Another striking instance is shown incidentally in the papers of Robert Carter of Nomoni Hall (manuscripts in possession of Virginia Historical Society). In 1782 Carter, a great Virginia planter, was operating a "Woolen and Linen Factory" at Aires, with six negro weavers and four negro winders, under the management of Daniel Sullivan. But apparently the profits did not justify the use of slave labor, and the enterprise was given up.

² This practice had its disadvantages. Witness the following extract from a letter of Colonel J. B. Lamar, a large Georgia planter, to his sister, Mrs. Howell Cobb, in 1846 (manuscript in possession of Mrs. A. S. Erwin of Athens, Georgia): "My man Ned the carpenter is idle or nearly so at the plantation. He is fixing gates and like the idle groom in *Pickwick* trying to fool himself into the belief that he is doing something . . . While I was gone I had him in town and on returning found that he had been drunk and fighting, and misbehaving in every way, so that I have banished him to rural life. He is an eye servant. If I was with him I could have the work done soon and cheap, but I am afraid to trust him off where there is no one he fears. . . . I shall sell the rascal the first chance I get."

own supervisor.¹ Upon many estates of small dimensions the owner would lead the plow-gang, making his own furrow, and requiring the negroes to keep pace with him, while his son would do likewise with the hoe-gang. Or if the planter spared himself from the manual labor, he would oversee the work either in person or through a hired overseer, or in many cases through a reliable slave whom he constituted foreman or "driver" and vested with authority subordinate to his own. In some localities, as in most of the Carolina rice district, the negroes instead of being worked strictly in gangs were given tasks of hoeing or plowing a specified area for each day.

Whether the method followed was the task system or the gang system, the great characteristic feature and the strength of the plantation method was in its division of labor and above all in its arrangement for the performance by the negroes of a labor nearly always of routine character. The routine system was the only system by which the unintelligent, involuntary negro labor could be employed to distinct advantage; and, other things being equal, the most successful planter was always he who arranged the most thorough and effective routine.

The saving of time and effort, together with the protection of the life, health, and strength of the laborers, were the essential requirements of success in the profitable use of slave labor under American conditions.² That success was heightened, of course,

¹ The gang system on the great sugar estates in Jamaica in the eighteenth century was described by Bryan Edwards in his *History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, bk. 4, chap. 5 (first edition, London, 1793, II. 128-129). The negroes were there worked in three sets, or gangs, he says. The first set, comprising most of the robust men and women, was employed in clearing the land, digging the holes, planting the cane, and in crop-time tending the mill. On the average plantation it included about one-third of the whole number of slaves, exclusive of domestics. The second set, composed of boys and girls, women in pregnancy, and convalescents, was employed in weeding the canes and other light work. The third set was of young children, attended by an old woman. They gathered feed for the pigs, weeded the gardens, etc., with the purpose mainly of being kept from idleness and learning habits of industry.

² The road to the fullest success is pointed out by Richard Corbin, a great Virginia planter, in a letter of instruction and advice, January 1, 1759, to James Semple, who was to be his agent during his protracted absence from home. He writes: "The care of [the] negroes is the first thing to be recommended that you give me timely notice of all their wants that they may be provided with all necessaries. . . . Observe a prudent and a watchful conduct over the overseers that they attend to their business with diligence, keep the negroes in good order, and enforce obedience by the example of their own industry, which is a more effectual method in every respect of succeeding and making good crops than Hurry and Severity; the ways of industry are constant and regular, not to be

when by fostering a sentiment of affection and loyalty, or by means of a system of inexpensive rewards, zeal was made to replace fear as a motive to labor.

Where the above-named features were present, the plantation system was probably the most efficient method ever devised for the use of stupid labor in agriculture on a large scale. Its efficiency was so great in the ante-bellum South that when slave labor became scarce and dear the planters were the only ones who could afford to buy it as a steady practice. It is true that a few corporations owned slaves for their service. For example, the Athens (Georgia) Manufacturing Company owned eight slaves in 1850¹; the South Carolina Railroad Company bought seventy-eight slaves for its service between 1845 and 1860²; and for a period prior to 1834 the state of Georgia attempted to use state-owned slaves for developing her roads and waterways.³ But as a rule corporations found it more advantageous to use free labor wherever possible; and when the use of slaves was necessary they preferred to hire them from their owners rather than to buy them and run the risk of loss from their illness, death, or escape.⁴ Where possible, indeed, it was fre-

in a hurry at one time and do nothing at another, but to be always usefully and steadily employed. A man who carries on business in this manner will be prepared for every incident that happens. He will see what work may be proper at the distance of some time and be gradually and leisurely providing for it, by this foresight he will never be in confusion himself and his business instead of a labor will be a pleasure to him . . . " (manuscript in Virginia Historical Society Library, Richmond, Virginia).

¹ Manuscript tax digest, Clarke County, Georgia, 1850.

² At prices ranging from \$400 to \$1,500. List printed, with names, dates, and prices, in *Report of the President of the South Carolina Railroad Company* for 1864. Copy in the Charleston Library, Charleston, South Carolina.

³ William C. Dawson, *A Compilation of the Laws of Georgia, 1819 to 1829* (Milledgeville, 1831), 399. Act appropriating \$50,000 for the purchase of additional able-bodied negroes in number sufficient to make a total of 190 when added to those already owned by the state. *Federal Union* (a newspaper published at Milledgeville, Georgia), January 29, 1834. Advertisement by W. C. Lyman, superintendent of roads for the eastern division of Georgia, giving notice that he will sell at auction on stated days in March and April 118 slaves belonging to the state of Georgia and attached to the several road-tending stations in his division.

⁴ E. g., the *Palladium* (Frankfort, Kentucky), December 1, 1868. Advertisement: "Negro Men Wanted. The subscribers wish to hire three or four Negro Men, to work in their Factory in Frankfort. They will be taught Weaving, and liberal wages will be paid for their services. Apply immediately to Danl Weisiger and Co."

Cf. also *Report of the Macon and Western R. R.* (Georgia) for 1859. Under the heading of repairs to the road, the superintendent lists the "labor of 100 negroes [i. e., slaves] with overseer and supervisor, an average of \$200 each (including food and clothing), \$20,000". (See next page.)

quently much preferred to avoid either the purchase or hiring of slaves in such enterprises as the building of railways, by letting out the work on contract to the planters who lived near by and could use their own slaves under their own personal superintendence.

Paternal attention was necessary as a safeguard against serious losses and disaster. Its necessity was recognized increasingly as the cost of slave labor mounted higher and higher in the nineteenth century. The competition of planters became keener; and the preservation of the health, happiness, and vigor of the laborers, as well as the maintenance of firm control over them, became more essential than ever for success in plantation industry.¹ When planters were absentees, there was pressing need of securing overseers of qualifications not alone of honesty, but of carefulness, forcefulness, knowledge, industry, and tact.² Where these qualities were lacking in the director, the enterprise often went to wreck.

Cf. also the Southern Banner (Athens, Georgia), January 12, 1854: "High price of Hands.—The Norfolk Argus says it has never known the demand for slaves greater than at the present season, nor that description of labor scarcer or higher than at the present season. Many farmers, rather than engage at the present rates, consider it more prudent to curtail their agricultural establishments. Ordinary field hands have commanded as high as one hundred and fifty dollars, and No. 1 laborers have readily brought \$225, accompanied with a life insurance for the value of the slave. The great demand for laborers proceeds from the turpentine regions in North and South Carolina, as well as the works of railroad improvements which are soon to commence."

¹ *Cf. Frederick Law Olmsted, A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States (1859), 45.*

² The overseer problem was a difficult and vital one in the conduct of the large estates, particularly when a planter had more than one plantation. The following narrative will illustrate. It is taken from the plantation records of Louis Manigault, Esq., of Charleston, South Carolina, who owned the two adjacent rice plantations "Gowrie" and "East Hermitage" on the Savannah River, operating them as a single large establishment. The records were made year by year in a continuous account. The manuscripts are now in the possession of Mrs. Hawkins Jenkins, of Pinopolis, South Carolina. The narrative for 1855 relates that the death of his overseer on December 7, 1855, left Mr. Manigault alone on the plantation. After refusing many applications for the place, he employed Leonard F. Venters, a young man of twenty-four years who had had experience near Georgetown, South Carolina, and was well recommended. Early in May Manigault left the plantation, as usual, for the summer. "Venters", he says in the account of operations, "made two great and fatal mistakes. He drew off his 'Sprout Water' too rapidly, prostrating his rice to the ground, and again he left his fields dry too long before he could get at them to give first hoeing. His rice was all stunted, sickly, and grass took him. We have made one half a crop. He says 'he will do better another year that now he sees into it', and as is well known, 'never change an overseer if you can help it', we try him once (but only once) more. We have purchased 19 [additional] negroes, amongst them 13 prime hands, costing in all \$11,850. Also 771 acres High Land on Georgia Main for Cholera Camps, Children's summer residence, etc. costing \$2,195 . . ." At the end of the next year he wrote: "My ex-

Where these qualities of strength, resourcefulness, and devotion to affairs were present, there was a decided tendency to an increase in the size of the plantation thus advantaged. This tendency was held somewhat in check by the force of conservative custom against the sale and purchase of slaves except in emergencies; but in the newly developing sections, and especially when times were flush and credit easily obtained, the rapid growth of slaveholdings in the hands of men of personal strength was a marked phenomenon.

Incapable owners, on the other hand, often lost part or all of their slave property. Perhaps this was less frequent with large holdings than with small ones, for the large estates could afford to employ capable overseers during the minority of heirs, and in similar contingencies, while the small ones could not. While some slaveholdings, then, were handed down from generation to generation unchanged in number except through births and deaths, by far the most of them were occasionally altered in size by purchase and sale; and the law of the survival of the stronger in the competition brought it about that there should be a growth in the size of those slaveholdings which were controlled by the most capable managers, and an increase in their number and size in the districts where negro labor could be used to the best advantage. Economy of effort and expense in administration, economy in the purchase of supplies, and perhaps also economy in the marketing of the product all worked toward strengthening the advantage of the large holder over the

pectations with regard to the overseer improving upon his last year's sad experience were vain. Mr. Venters did do a little better than before, as far as an increase in the crop was concerned, but very little; moreover elated by a strong and very false religious feeling he began to injure the plantation a vast deal, placing himself on a par with the negroes, by even joining in with them at their prayer meetings, breaking down long established discipline, which in every case is so *difficult* to preserve, favouring and siding in any difficulty with the people, against the Drivers, besides causing numerous grievances which I now have every reason to suppose my Neighbours knew; and perhaps I was laughed at and ridiculed for keeping in my employ such a man. I discharged Mr. Venters, and on 8th January, 1858, engaged Mr. Wm. H. Bryan . . . He is very highly recommended by Dr. King, and spoken of as a good planter and a man of character. I give him \$800 for the year 1858 . . ." At the end of the next crop-year the record runs: "The crop of 1858, W. H. Bryan Overseer, has turned out wretchedly. From what I can learn since my return from Europe and after spending the entire winter of '58-'59 on the plantation, there has been gross neglect and great want of attention on the part of the Overseer . . . On 8th April, 1859, Mr. Wm. Capers Jr., an Overseer of high rank and standing, . . . takes charge at the rate of One thousand dollars per annum, the highest salary we have yet paid . . ." Capers proved efficient, brought things to rights, and made a very good crop. But Mr. Manigault expresses in his observations for 1859 the well-founded belief: "The truth is, on a plantation, to attend to things properly it requires *both Master and Overseer.*"

small one, and of the strong man over the weak. The concentration of slaveholdings was an inevitable tendency.

Yet there were hindrances and limitations to this process. In the first place, the whole body of the negro population was tremendously inert, and of course made no migration or progress of any sort of its own accord. Its labor as a rule was good only in a routine, and any change was difficult and problematical. Many of the whites also fell into a routine and were disposed to let good enough alone and put off changes till the morrow. After the American Revolution there were no entails or primogeniture, and estates once accumulated were liable to be divided in inheritance. Plantations, furthermore, might easily become too large and the fields too scattered for effective administration. The standard of maximum efficiency varied in the different staple regions and even on different soils within the same belt; but in every case such a maximum existed, and any growth beyond it decreased the profits of the establishment. Undue cumbrousness might be avoided by dividing one plantation into two or three; but that was not fully satisfactory, for overseers were expensive and they could never adequately fill the place of the master. There was a current adage, "The master's footprints are fertilizer to his soil."¹ In colonial times the limitations on the size of plantation estates were less cogent; but when slave prices mounted and when, in the later period, the margin of profit became small, it became more advisable to invest profits in bank-stock and the like and avoid too great cumbrousness of land and slave property. The actual size of the average slaveholding, indeed, was very much smaller than the layman has been led to believe.

There was, in the second place, a limitation of habitat. No cereals nor any other crops but the four or five Southern staples could be cultivated as a main product with the system of full routine

¹ The force of this is illustrated by the following description by a cotton-planter of his troubles and resolutions: "I have discharged Harvey, the overseer at the Hurricane, for getting drunk, neglecting business and not paying attention to that important branch of planting, viz. raising hogs. I have employed a man named Bagly in his place, a man of some reputation as an overseer . . . I was in Baldwin [County] yesterday, trying to infuse new energy into everybody, and I think my turning off the late overseer has aided me in my exertion, as both overseers seem to understand that retaining their places depends on their energy and industry, and when they flag they must find a home elsewhere. I am kept busy and intend they shall be too, as long as my health lasts . . . I have opened a regular set of books like a merchant. I found my business getting so confused I was forced to do it, and I am very glad I was, as I now keep all my accounts as easily and clearly as I could wish." Extracts from a letter from Colonel John B. Lamar, Macon, Georgia, January 5, 1846, to Hon. Howell Cobb. Manuscript in possession of Mrs. A. S. Erwin, Athens, Georgia.

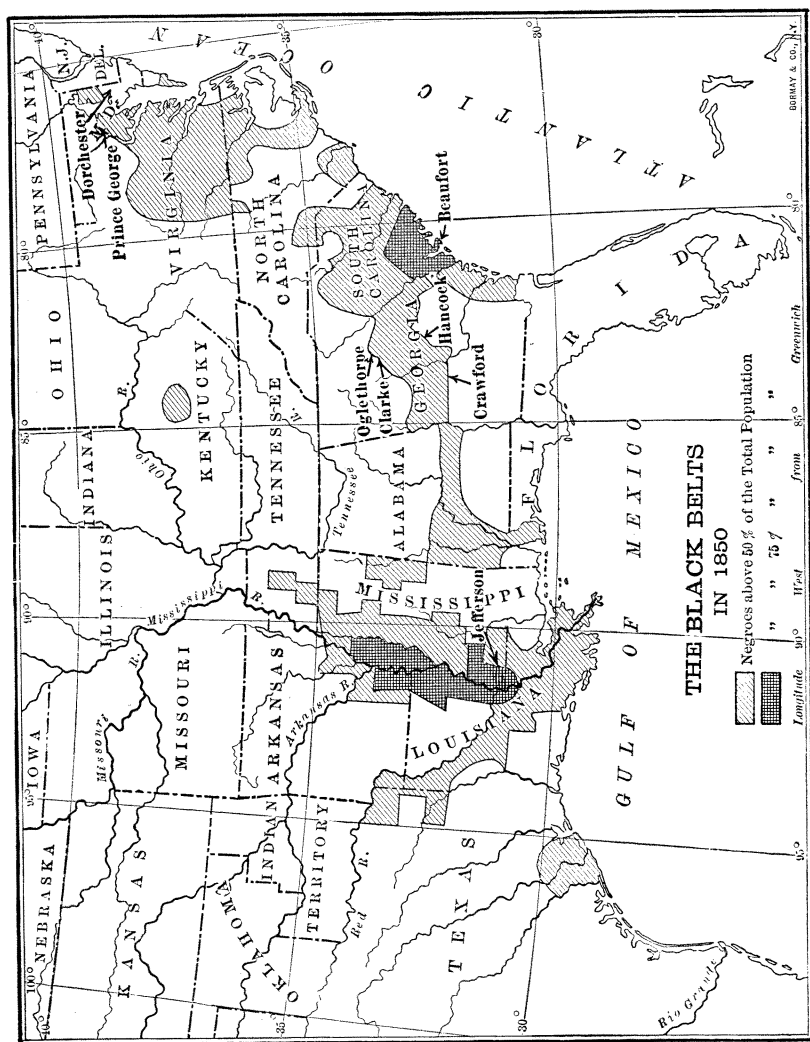
which plantation industry required. That system was always confined, accordingly, within the staple areas and within the districts where economical transportation could be had, and where public policy was friendly.

The friendliness or unfriendliness of a given region toward the plantation system might undergo decisive change. For example, the invention of the cotton-gin and the improvement of transportation made the Piedmont available for planters; while, on the other hand, the exhaustion of soils in parts of Maryland and Virginia and the rise of tobacco production at a smaller cost in the West, drove out the plantation system from some of the tide-water counties there.

The actual development as regards slavery in any given locality, whether in the South or the North, was the resultant of the interplay of these forces working for and against the plantation system. There were large parts of the South which, like the whole North, failed at any time to attract planters. The area, on the other hand, which invited them in large numbers may be divided into several distinct staple-producing sections, and may best be studied statistically through inquiry into the growth of the industrial units in selected counties which possess the type-features of the section.

For the colonial period, hardly any reliable statistics in this connection are available for study; but in view of the fairly complete repetition of processes in the successive settlement of similar areas in the plantation districts, it will here suffice to use the data for the period from 1790 to 1860, which is covered by the United States censuses and by certain local tax returns which we may use to supplement the census enumerations. The United States Census Bureau has never printed any local statistics of slaveholdings except for the year 1860, and many of the manuscript census returns for the early decades have been irretrievably lost; for example, those for Virginia and Kentucky to 1810, for Tennessee and Georgia to 1820, and for Alabama to 1830. But counties in Maryland may be taken as typical of the black belt of the whole Virginia-Maryland region, and a South Carolina coast district as an example for the Georgia lowlands also. There is no trouble in securing tables for the Mississippi-Louisiana region; and as for the Georgia-Carolina upland cotton belt, the summaries here presented from the manuscript tax returns in selected counties are preferable to those of the decennial censuses, because they were made much more frequently, and a series of returns for closely adjacent years is available for the study of the effects of particular economic crises, and the like.

These upland Georgia counties which we have selected, Oglethorpe, Hancock, and Clarke, all lying in the older part of the cotton belt, are probably the most instructive of all for which we have data; for in the period covered by these statistics these counties went through the full development from practically frontier and



colonial organization, through and past their agricultural prime, and in turn came to furnish numerous emigrants to colonize the lands farther west.

GROWTH OF SLAVEHOLDINGS IN SELECTED COUNTIES OF THE GEORGIA COTTON BELT.
(Statistics compiled from county tax digests.)

Year	Numbers of Slaveholders and Slaves.						Largest Holding.	Total Owners.	Total Slaves.	Average Holding.
	I 1-3	II 4-9	III 10-19	IV 20-49	V 50-99	VI over 99				

OGLETHORPE COUNTY.

1794	215	114	60	10	0	0	26	389	1,980	5.1
1800	272	163	69	17	0	0	31	521	2,788	5.32
1805	295	234	79	22	1	0	76	631	3,598	5.7
1810	310	262	139	37	3	0	73	757	5,255	7.07
1815	286	230	138	50	5	0	77	709	5,457	7.73
1820	280	258	130	82	8	0	77	758	6,444	8.5
1835	219	203	142	89	12	0	80	655	6,689	10.2
1840	183	153	131	103	17	0	90	587	7,111	12.1
1860	165	151	112	96	16	1	130	541	6,589	12.2

HANCOCK COUNTY.

1802	368	288	135	26	2	0	53	819	4,823	5.9
1807	378	323	185	45	3	0	65	934	6,424	6.9
1813	227	222	136	64	4	0	77	653	5,612	8.6
1821	229	208	145	88	8	0	93	678	6,331	9.34
1825	197	147	107	86	13	2	152	552	6,315	11.44
1835	145	132	107	77	17	2	180	480	5,680	11.84
1844	123	133	113	53	21	2	205	445	5,787	13.0
1856	144	112	106	95	27	3	146	487	7,516	17.45

CLARKE COUNTY.

1805	205	117	31	9	0	0	45	362	1,758	4.86
1810	191	123	57	10	1	0	51	382	2,124	5.55
1815	137	129	61	17	1	0	51	345	2,167	6.4
1818	164	152	83	24	0	0	46	413	2,997	7.02
1820	181	141	97	29	0	0	44	448	3,139	7.0
1830	266	154	91	55	3	1	120	510	4,529	8.9
1837	159	158	88	53	8	6	208	472	5,303	11.3
1840	130	161	73	59	5	4	209	432	4,358	10.16
1845	177	146	101	56	9	2	247	491	5,231	10.6
1850	177	163	103	73	4	1	102	521	5,217	10.13
1855	152	161	116	60	7	2	135	498	5,166	10.36
1864	167	175	111	73	8	1	150	535	5,420	10.13

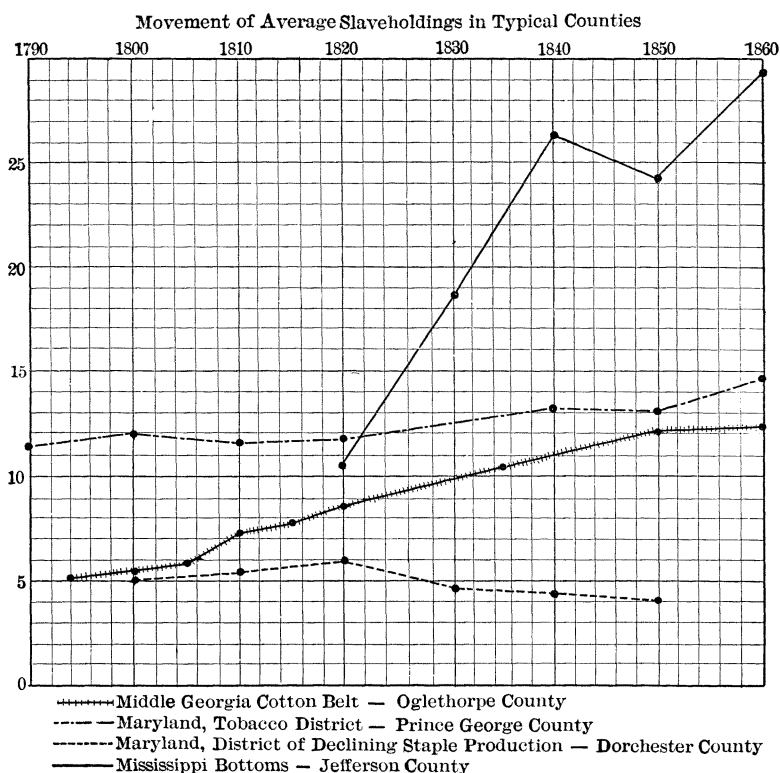
By study of these tables¹ and charts, which date from the time when cotton production began in the upland district, the effect of the growth of the cotton industry may be watched and measured. The tables deal with both the number and the size of the slaveholdings. Studying them with the chronology of prosperity and depressions in the cotton belt in mind,² we find the following facts:

1. The *average size* of slaveholdings tended to increase with moderation in ordinary periods, while in periods of either marked prosperity or severe depression there was nearly always a stimulated growth of the larger slaveholdings and a thinning out of the

¹ The manuscript returns from which these summaries were made are to be found in the court-houses at the respective county-seats.

² Cf. *Political Science Quarterly*, XX. 267.

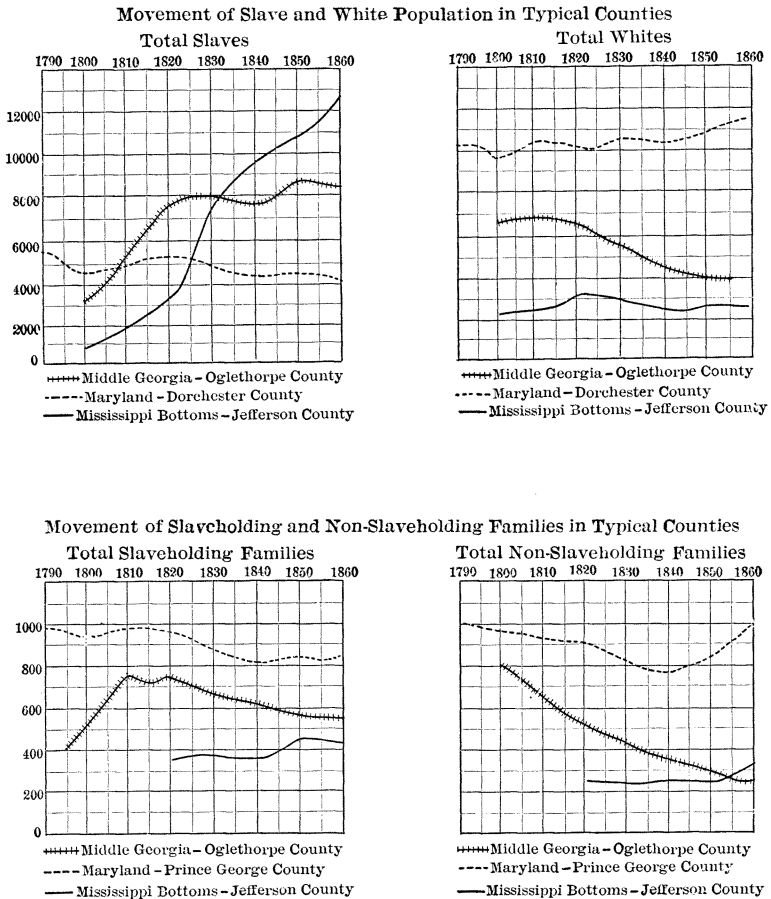
small ones, and hence a quickened growth in the size of the average slaveholding.



2. The *aggregate number* of slaveholdings tended to increase or decrease according to the stage of development which the community had reached. That is, so long as population was scanty and opportunity abundant, the small producers as well as the large ones flowed in. But when the land had become more completely occupied and opportunity restricted, an outflow would begin, and the smallest units would lead the exodus. Both flush times and hard times quickened this fluctuation of the total of units, merely hastening movements which were already in progress. These tendencies are illustrated more fully in Oglethorpe and Hancock Counties than in Clarke, for in Clarke County there lay the considerable town of Athens. A town, of course, contributed to the total of slaves a large number of domestic servants, who were not affected by the laws controlling the units in agriculture.

For the sake of clearness in the accompanying charts, Oglethorpe is used as a single type county for the upland cotton belt.

In the respective charts, the line for Oglethorpe County shows: (1) a moderate and steady growth in the average size of slaveholdings; (2) a fluctuating but almost continuous rise in the total number of slaves; and (3) a decline in the total of whites after about 1810; (4) that the number of slaveholdings increased until 1810, held its own to 1820, when the aggregate population reached its highest point, and decreased thereafter through the lessening of the number



of small slaveholders; (5) that the non-slaveholders, throughout the period covered, decreased continuously, though with diminishing speed in the later decades. The number of non-slaveholders for the several periods has been roughly ascertained by comparing the number of slaveholding families in a given year with the total number of families, as stated in the federal censuses.

MOVEMENT OF SLAVEHOLDINGS IN OTHER TYPICAL AREAS. (Statistics compiled from the United States Census Returns.)

Year.	Numbers of Slaveholders and Slaves.						Largest Holding.	Total Owners.	Total Slaves.	Average Holding.
	I 1-3	II 4-9	III 10-19	IV 20-49	V 50-99	VI Over 99				

JEFFERSON COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI.

1820	125	97	75	40	6	2	158	345	3,665	10.6
1830	66	107	78	88	18	6	251	363	6,700	18.4
1840	72	74	58	95	39	11	456	349	9,176	26.3
1850	99	86	68	108	63	7	374	431	10,493	24.3
1860	81	87	70	99	71	17	above 300	425	12,396	29.2

BEAUFORT DISTRICT, SOUTH CAROLINA.

1790	143	110	88	153	67	24	607 (next, 265)	585	14,236	24.3
1800	107	127	115	152	70	26	300	600	16,031	26.7
1850	148	189	174	184	131	83	610 (next, 480)	909	32,279	35.5
1860	202	253	188	216	142	69	above 500	1,070	32,530	30.4

PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY, MARYLAND.

1790	358	272	202	124	24	6	265	986	11,176	11.2
1800	294	294	180	117	31	5	155	921	11,067	12.0
1810	330	284	206	135	32	3	125	990	11,760	11.6
1820	315	290	199	132	34	3	117	973	11,484	11.7
1840	257	229	148	154	23	3	202	814	10,636	13.1
1850	256	241	164	166	28	5	198	860	11,510	13.0
1860	269	199	170	162	40	7	under 200	847	12,479	14.7

DORCHESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND.

1800	465	304	85	28	1	1	121	884	4,596	5.0
1810	478	353	92	29	2	1	151	955	5,063	5.3
1820	560	382	100	21	1	1	200	1,065	5,198	4.9
1830	585	379	96	19	0	1	116	1,080	5,005	4.7
1840	531	355	81	8	1	0	65	976	4,222	4.3
1850	613	351	78	8	1	0	56	1,051	4,281	4.0

The data for Beaufort district, South Carolina, and Jefferson County, Mississippi, illustrate the movements for those parts of the black belts in which the proportion of negroes was particularly great, and show that while there was a larger unit of maximum efficiency in the alluvial areas, the same general influences held good which prevailed in Middle Georgia. Beaufort is cited as an old plantation area, and Jefferson as a new and rapidly developing one. The statistical picture in these cases is slightly disturbed by the fact that stretches of pine-barrens alternated with the fertile bottom-lands, and offered a haven to a number of poor whites who were too low in the scale of industry to be affected by the competition of the

staple producers. The movement in the fertile areas was well described by Messrs. Simons and Alston in their speeches in the South Carolina legislature at the beginning of the nineteenth century, on the subject of the slave-trade. Their description, as reported, was as follows :

As one man grows wealthy and thereby increases his stock of negroes, he wants more land to employ them on: and being fully able, he bids a high price for his less opulent neighbor's plantation, who by selling advantageously here, can raise money enough to go into the back country, where he can be more on a level with the most forehanded, can get lands cheaper, and speculate or grow rich by industry as he pleases.¹

The two Maryland counties analyzed are typical of the longest settled areas, in their two partly contrasting portions: the portion which maintained the plantation system, and the portion which had replaced its staple by varied industry and had abandoned plantation methods. The first of these is illustrated by Prince George, which was in 1860 the chief tobacco county in Maryland; the second by Dorchester, which by 1860 had altogether ceased producing the staple. In each of them the population, both whites and slaves, tended to remain fairly stationary. In Prince George the number of the small holdings diminished and that of the larger ones increased as time went on, while in Dorchester just the opposite movement was usually in progress. Where plantation methods were no longer followed, there was little incentive to the concentration of slaves. In such cases the negroes were wanted rather as "help" than as gang labor.

The districts which did not ever produce any of the staples in appreciable quantity lie beyond the scope of this essay. Suffice it to say that in them there was little or no importation of negroes except possibly in rare periods of particular local prosperity; and when, after such importation, slave prices reached high levels in the country at large it was often found more advisable to sell the slaves than to employ them in the non-staple industries.

To summarize: the plantation system was the master feature in the régime of American slaveholding. In the prevalence of industrial competition, that system controlled in large measure the migration and the activity of both races. It tended to segregate the races; and, except for domestic service, it tended under limitations, in the long run, to eliminate the small slaveowner and to constitute the industrial system entirely of the two types, the paternalistic plantation and the democratic small farm, the one devoted always primarily

¹ "Diary of Edward Hooker", *Annual Report of the American Historical Association* for 1896, p. 878.

to the staples, the other as a rule depending little upon staple production.

The dynamic view is full of significance; industry and society while apparently static were really in continuous motion and change. Affairs proceeded much in a routine; but no repetition of process was ever quite identical with its preceding occurrence. The routine itself was essentially dynamic. Impelled by the force of competition and directed by the requirements of capitalized industry, the plantation régime promoted the growth of slaveholding accretions and extended the black belts wherever gang labor could be made the most effective system.

ULRICH B. PHILLIPS.